

Pay-Per-View / Video-On-Demand

At one stage, PPV and VOD channels were considered separate and discrete companies, but all have been folded in as arms of the main channels. Unlike VOD, PPV services show the same movie or event to all subscribers at the same time and charge an extra premium for these events. Besides movies as on Starz On Demand, PPV carries primarily major boxing, wrestling and other fighting events (specifically UFC, Ultimate Fighting Championship). HBO has had the most success with PPV, generating huge revenues for top matches. Every MVPD now includes some VOD channels where subscribers choose among the available episodes of recent and older television shows and movies. The selection is limited by the rights holders so as not to undercut their main broadcast and cable channels and DVD sales.

Hyping Subscription Networks

Like the broadcast networks, basic and premium networks require sophisticated marketing. Although some newer networks naturally focus on acquiring new viewers, the usual strategy is to retain existing viewers while developing new services. Above all, promoting *brand identity* is the key marketing goal, as in such phrases as “Lifetime—Television for Women” and “Spike TV! The First Network for Men.”

All subscription services use on-air *tune-in* and *cross-channel promotion*. Tune-in promotion encourages viewers to stay with the channel for upcoming programs. Cross-channel promotion allows regular viewers of one cable channel (or website) to learn about the shows on another program service. Most of these efforts are accomplished using automated equipment with *insert capability* that can introduce one channel’s promos into another channel’s program lineup in predetermined time slots. In addition, automated *flow-titling* has been adopted by many channels. This form of on-air promotion places an overlay on one side at the bottom of the screen naming the next program coming up. To the annoyance of viewers, such overlays sometimes obscure a crucial part of the story content and certainly draw

the viewers’ attention away from the ongoing drama. Nonetheless, like network identification *bugs* (logos in the corner on live programming), automated advance titling is probably here to stay.

Over the years, the premium channels have developed especially sophisticated, big-budget campaigns for marketing their programs year-round using slogans, giveaways and special package rates. The actual promotion vehicles include mass media advertising, reminders in monthly bills (*statement stuffers*) and coupons in mailers. When trying to expand subscriptions in a local area, they may temporarily unscramble their signals to give cable viewers a taste of what they are missing. Premium channels seek greater *buy rates* by broadly (and loudly) promoting specific events or signature programs (such as *Game of Thrones* on HBO) through all available promotional vehicles. They also send a deluge of special mailers to those who have discontinued their pay channels. *When successful, anticipating and meeting customer expectations creates brand loyalty that is difficult to dislodge.* Just how this principle will apply in some future all-demand age is an interesting question.

Regardless of the method, subscription network programmers must get closely involved with the promotional and marketing efforts on the air, in print advertising and on related websites. These days, *the job of acquiring and scheduling content is tied to making sure that an audience will be there when the program is shown.* Launching a new program sometimes calls for innovative methods. One event that backfired on Turner was its promotion of an “Adult Swim” program called *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. A few fake devices that looked a lot like bombs were placed under bridges in Boston, causing a mild panic. Naturally, the promotion chief lost his job over that stunt.

Audio Services on Cable

In addition to video programming, cable and satellite systems provide subscribers with radio and audio services. Like video services, radio and audio come in both basic and pay forms and are mostly

nationally distributed. Above all others, in the U.S. satellite radio means Sirius XM, a pay service which can be received by mobile receivers in cars or hand carried and by personal computers. It also has competitors such as Music Choice (12 channels), DMX (100 channels), WFMT Radio Network and Yesterday Today.

Big cable companies such as Comcast provide several channels of national digital audio, mostly as part of a package of cable services. Some of these channels carry advertising, and some do not. There are also pay services that charge subscribers a monthly fee for a series of specialized music channels, which are collected by the local cable or satellite operator and shared between the two entities. If people want to hear the king of shock jocks on satellite radio, for example, they'll have to pay (see Chapter 12).

Cable operators are understandably skeptical about the size of pay audio's potential as a revenue stream for wired distribution. The buy rate for all digital audio services runs about 15 percent of basic cable television subscribers, and marketing plans generally target cable subscribers who have high-end CD units. On the positive side, newer surround-sound and other receiver advances have much improved reception, making more consumers more sensitive to audio quality. This new awareness and appreciation of audio spurred the digital audio business, but cable audio now has plenty of competition from internet downloading, iPods and even cell phone aps (see Chapters 11 and 12).

Twisting Paths for the Future

The last five years have brought dramatic changes in subscription cable networks—largely resulting from television's digitalization and broadband growth. Advertiser-supported cable networks have proliferated into families of niche, subniche and microniche program channels serving subgroups of Americans. At the same time, the subscription services feel pressure toward online distribution and VOD while trying to maintain their paying cable and satellite customer bases. Finding profitable internet and

on-demand models for subscription television networks that will be profitable remains the active goal.

As digitalization permits greatly increased channel capacity—and impulse technology becomes standard for cable converters—a wide range of possibilities opens up for cable operators and programmers alike. Increasing numbers of cable subscribers can now order a movie, concert or sporting event in an instant, and, increasingly, they avail themselves of the opportunities. The quantity of options increases daily, many of which are free, not pay, at this time. Projections of 90 million VOD homes in just a few years may entice Hollywood's studios to release movies to pay-per-view services closer to their theatrical release date, truly creating a "home box office" bonanza for movie makers and event organizers. The key obstacle is that Hollywood and the big program producers receive much of their revenue from domestic and international syndication and are reluctant to gamble with anything that threatens that honey pot.

One caveat lies in the rapid spread of online programs that allow viewers with high-speed online connections to watch pirated movies. Hollywood studios that invest \$150 million for a feature film have more to lose from pilfered content than a music company whose product costs a fraction to make. A digital copy is a perfect replica of the original, and faster connections and larger hard drives encourage pirates to defeat the copy-protection schemes designed by the content providers. The curse of pirating generates big headaches for producers.

In the midst of rapidly changing technologies, programmers hunt new methods of cutting program costs while recycling and reusing what they have in exciting ways. Basic service strives to identify programming with appeal to narrow slices of subscribers in order to carve out unique services, while premium channels adopt a *low-price, high-volume* strategy of splintered services. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of potential subscribers in such countries as India and China have become a powerful lure for U.S. cable program suppliers, who can clearly see the pie at home being split into smaller portions by increasing numbers of hungry new services. Increasing access to

potential viewers in the once-inaccessible countries, however, is fueling experimentation with new types of niche services and providing hope to wannabes who envision a world market of sufficient size to support their programming.

Nearly all newer and proposed program services fit into the niche, subniche and microniche categories. Very few seek broad appeal. These newer services function like radio station formats, targeting a specific audience segment with demographically-tied programming, talent and promotion. More niche program services mean greater competition, however, and in almost every category or genre, the dominant service now has many challengers ... including the monster Netflix who directly challenges HBO and indirectly challenges all of cable.

Because of efficiencies in cross-promotion and the reuse of original programming in multiple media, the clearest direction for the future is that—joint ventures, mergers and buyouts will increasingly integrate cable program suppliers with both the companies that distribute their wares and with broadcast services. The trend toward building

media conglomerates that reach across media technologies and once-rigid legal boundaries, as well as across international borders in distribution, is undeniably accelerating, and Comcast is leading the way.

Notes

1. Because of conflicts over program distribution rights, the FCC grandfathered five satellite-distributed broadcast stations but banned others from wide satellite distribution. The five remaining superstations are WGN (now called WGN America), WWOR-TV, WSBK-TV, WPIX-TV, and KTLA-TV. KYUR-TV in Alaska calls itself a superstation but is actually an affiliate of ABC and CW.
2. Camcast and Disney have bet on the monthly subscription model for the next decade. In 2012, they reached a 10-year agreement for Camcast to distribute all Disney television content (about 70 ABC, Disney and ESPN services). This extraordinary deal includes VOD and streaming for tablets, phones and other (perhaps not yet invented) devices, and it bolsters TV Everywhere as the business model of the future. Amy Chozick and Brooks Barnes, "If Disney Owns It, Comcast Will Soon Be Streaming It." *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2012, p, B2.

Public Television Programming

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Do you sometimes say “I never watch public TV”? Are you sure you didn’t devour *Sesame Street* as a kid? Did your teacher make you watch NOVA when you were in school? Don’t you sometimes find yourself watching *Curious George* with a sibling or *Antiques Roadshow* with some older adults? Did you watch part of Ken Burns’ *Baseball*? A lot of people think they never see public television, but they occasionally do. In fact, about half of Americans watch something on public television at least once a week.

A Special Kind of Television

Public television, its mission and its public service objectives occupy a unique position in American broadcasting. Generations of children have grown up with *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* in this country and abroad, and adults have sampled *Masterpiece*, NOVA and *PBS NewsHour* for decades. Public TV, once known as educational television, has become a staple among the informational and cultural offerings in the United States, taken for granted in many households and schoolrooms.

Public television didn’t develop overnight or without a struggle. Critics have argued that public broadcasting presents a left-leaning ideological stance, caters to an elite audience, or has become unnecessary in an age of large-capacity cable and satellite systems, DVD distribution and internet television. Many have questioned public funding for public TV, maintaining that the marketplace—not taxpayers—should provide the specialized programming available on the noncommercial service.

Even U.S. presidents and members of Congress have entered the fray, seeking to eliminate federal funding for public television stations, PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) and NPR (National Public Radio). In 1972, President Richard Nixon—angered by programming he viewed as left of center—vetoed the system’s three-year federal appropriation and sent word that he wanted PBS out of the “public affairs business.” Nine years later, in 1981, President Ronald Reagan also tried to cut the system’s funding entirely, this time in an effort to balance the federal budget. In

both these cases, the U.S. Congress (thankfully) overturned the executive mandates and authorized funding. Within 14 years, however, conservatives in Congress would take the lead to defund public broadcasting once again, an effort repeated yet again in 2011. Ultimately, in both 1995 and 2011, late night negotiations prevailed and saved the day for public television. Even though public broadcasting maintained level funding in 1972, 1981, 1995 and 2011, these battles were fierce and the outcomes uncertain. (And of course, “level” means “less” as costs rise.) These struggles speak to the tenuous and fragile qualities of public broadcasting’s financial position.

Other facets of public broadcasting also point to a less-than-rosy future for the national service. PBS went from an average 2.0 rating overall in the 1999–2000 season to 1.5 nationally in the 2004–05 season and 1.2 in 2009. Underwriting support for national programming has seriously slumped since 2001, resulting in the loss of more than a third of all corporate support by 2004 and the withdrawal of several major donors for primetime programs, including ExxonMobil, long-time supporter of *Masterpiece* (that was a biggie). By 2009, underwriting for the PBS core schedule had dropped by 50 percent.

In addition, other forms of giving have decreased, resulting in shrinking state, university and foundation support, as well as smaller member contributions. These broad-based cuts to national underwriting revenues were due, in part, to decisions by some sponsors to migrate to networks and basic cable, where they could buy call-to-action advertising. Some major-market stations, including WTTW-Chicago, also blamed PBS, which has not, they charge, been active enough in securing “what we most need—powerful, successful, innovative programming.”¹

Finally, if funding is shrinking, so too is public television, as stations either “go dark” or choose, like KCET-Los Angeles, to leave the system entirely (see 10.7). Analysts suggest the problems confronting public television are not new or unique to PTV and range from financial woes in a down economy to the persistent programming challenge of having enough content of quality and variety to attract a broad audience.

Even with these sometimes crippling problems, public television stations persist, broadcasting

multiple streams of content 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in all regions of the country, expanding into HD and online, and continuing to serve schools in essential ways. On the more than 350 public television stations that cover 99 percent of the country, public television provides local programs and a nightly core schedule in HD of quality arts, education and public affairs series, supplemented by informational websites. Even though many Americans view public television as alternative service, watching it only part of the time, more than half of the

country uses public broadcasting each month, generating a monthly broadcast audience of more than 121.9 million people. *Researchers report that Americans rate public television as one of the most trusted of all American institutions.*

The following sections trace out the history, philosophy and practices of this uniquely American broadcast service, focusing on programming strategies and current challenges confronting public broadcasting. Some of these issues also resonate with public service broadcasting in Europe (see 10.1).

10.1 Public Broadcasting in Europe

European public broadcasting has long been seen as the ideal by a number of U.S. public broadcasters. *Public service broadcasting* (as public broadcasting is known in Europe) has historically enjoyed adequate funding, editorial autonomy and broad acceptance and support of its educational and cultural purpose throughout Western Europe, though times got tougher during the recent global financial crisis. As one might guess, the establishment of successful public broadcasters in Eastern and Southern Europe has been more difficult. While all broadcasting services faced severe budget cuts over the past few years, stations are also threatened by national and regional governmental agencies that seek to use the public airwaves as mouthpieces for their own political agendas and policies.

Newly established public broadcasting services in Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia, Herzegovina and Hungary seem particularly at risk from political interference. For example, in 2009, the Prime Minister of Kosovo suspended the public license fee for RTK (*Radio Televizija Kosova*), virtually eliminating the funding base for the Kosovo public broadcaster. The suspension of this monthly fee (which had been added to all electrical bills in Kosovo) caused the European Broadcasting Union, which represents all public broadcasters in Europe, to issue a public letter charging that this decision endangers the broadcaster's independence. Further, the new Media Law established in Hungary in January 2011 has seriously undermined the independence of that country's public broadcaster, *Magyar Televizio* (MTV).

Under this law, adopted after the 2010 national elections, Hungarian public broadcasting has been forced to alter its editorial policy based on the composition of the Hungarian parliament. Finally, changes in mid-2011 to the governing statutes for BHRT (Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina) have granted broad powers to a governmental Steering Committee to interfere in the public broadcaster's editorial and managerial issues.

Public broadcasters in Western Europe view these political threats to public broadcasting in Eastern and Southern Europe partly as a result of the region's lack of internalization of democratic process. Concerned that public broadcasting in these countries could disappear in the next few years, the European Broadcasting Union stepped in to provide more than 500 hours of high quality content each year to public service broadcasters in Eastern and Southern Europe.

Further, as reported by Eric Pfanner,* public broadcasters in France, Germany, England and Italy have agreed to provide consulting and technical assistance with their neighbors' transition to digital broadcasting. Importantly, the Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO) has issued public statements demanding broad respect for the social purposes of public broadcasting and its role as the bedrock of democracy and public information throughout Europe. Attitude change is likely to come slowly and in fits and starts.

*Eric Pfanner, "Public Radio and TV Get Peers' Help in Europe," *New York Times*, 5 December 2009.

Program Philosophy

Officially established in 1967 as a national broadcasting service, public television's 125 original stations were all committed to education and community. As descendants of educational radio—which had its own origins in the broadcast reform movement of the late 1920s and early 1930s²—*these stations were united by beliefs that broadcasting should not only be a positive force in society, but that it should also reside outside the capitalist funding model that has defined U.S. broadcasting since the mid-thirties.* These foundational tenets have driven public television's programming philosophy and ideas about audience and purpose since the founding of public broadcasting as a part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society in the 1960s, but they are getting a sore test today. Nonetheless, these concepts continue to frame public broadcasting's struggle for adequate funding and, as discussed in the following sections, ongoing debates about programming.

In fact, arguments over content have persisted within the industry since public television began. For stations, the debate centers on the meaning of *noncommercial educational broadcasting*, which is what the Communications Act of 1934 and the FCC call public television's program service. Noncommercial television service came into existence in 1952 when educational interests lobbied the FCC into creating a special class of reserved channels within the television allocations exclusively dedicated to “educational television.”

One argument defines *educational* in the narrow sense of *instructional*. From that viewpoint public television should teach—it should direct its programs to school and college classrooms and to out-of-classroom students. The last thing PTV should do is to compete for commercial television's mass audience. Others define *educational* in a broader sense. They want to reach out to viewers of all kinds with programs that enrich lives and respond to needs. This group perceives “instructional” television as a duty that sometimes must be performed, but their devotion goes to the wide range of programming the public has come to think of as public television.

The Carnegie Commission on Educational Television introduced the term *public television* in 1967. The commission convinced many in government and broadcasting that the struggling new service had to generate wider support than it had in its fledgling years. One of the impediments to such support, the commission felt, was the word *educational*, which gave the service an unpopular image. They suggested *public television* as a more neutral term. Thus, a distinction has grown between *instructional television* (ITV)³ and *public television* (PTV).

Lacking a truly national definition for public television's program service, a PTV station's programmer must deal with the unresolved, internal questions of what it means to be a noncommercial educational broadcasting service. The PTV programmer must come to grips with a station's particular program philosophy. Philosophies vary widely from one station to the next, but two common themes persist: being educational and being noncommercial. These terms imply that *public television must directly serve “the people”*; *it must be educational and different from commercial television.* One of the implications of such a fundamental difference is that public television programming need not pursue the largest possible audience at whatever cost to programming. Public broadcasting has a special mission to serve audiences that would otherwise be neglected because they are too small to interest commercial broadcasting. This difference in outlook has great programming significance. It means that the public station programmer is relieved of one of the most relentless constraints inhibiting a commercial programmer's freedom of choice.

At the same time, public television cannot cater only to the smallest groups with the most esoteric tastes in the community. Broadcasting is still a mass medium, whether commercial or noncommercial, and can justify occupying a broadcast channel and the considerable expense of broadcast facilities only if it reaches relatively large numbers of people. Public broadcasting achieves this goal cumulatively by reaching many small groups, which add up to a respectably large cumulative total in the course of a week. Remember, roughly 50 million U.S. television households tune in to something on PTV each week.

Moreover, on the commercial side, PBS continues to move toward practices consistent with for-profit media. For example, to appeal more powerfully to large underwriters, PBS has expanded the time devoted to underwriting credits and changed their formats so they now resemble commercials. It is telling that some corporate underwriters now use the same spots on public television that they air on the commercial networks and cable. PBS has also formed partnerships with commercial entities (DirecTV, Comcast and others) to generate income and has commercialized its online site (*pbs.org*) by selling advertising on the webpage itself and throughout some of the programs streamed on the site. Finally, as discussed later in this chapter, PBS is exploring the option of creating internal program breaks for placement of its own promotional spots, a move seen by many as a first step toward within-program underwriting content. It seems clear, then, that PBS is not as completely “noncommercial” as it once was ... in attitude or practice.

The Network Model

Programming the national Public Broadcasting Service is a little like trying to prepare a universally acclaimed gourmet meal. The trouble is that a committee of 177 plans the menu, and the people who pay the grocery bills want to be sure the meal is served with sufficient regard for their images. Some people coming to the dinner table want the meal to be enjoyable and fun; others want the experience to be uplifting and enlightening; still others insist that the eating be instructive; and the seafood and chicken cooks want to be sure the audience comes away with a better understanding of the problems of life underwater and in the coop.⁴

The analogies are not farfetched. A board of appointed and elected representatives governs PBS during three-year terms. The PBS Board of Directors includes both professional directors, who lead public television stations, and general directors, who represent the general public. The membership of public television elects the professional directors, while the general directors are selected by the PBS board,

which also appoints the PBS president and CEO. The directors are responsible for governing and setting policy for PBS. In total, the PBS Board of Directors is comprised of 27 members, including 14 professional directors, 12 general directors, and the PBS president. The board is expected to serve 168 public television licensees operating 354 public stations all over the country and in such remote areas as Guam, American Samoa and Bethel, Alaska.

Because PBS produces no programming, it uses a host of program suppliers and tries to promote and schedule their programs effectively. In addition, constituencies ranging from independent producers to minority groups constantly pressure public television to meet their special needs. And, of course, the program funders have their own agendas too.

In *commercial* television, programming and money flow *from* network headquarters *to* affiliates. Production is centrally controlled and distributed on a one-way line to affiliated stations, who are paid compensation to push the network button and transmit what the network feeds. Most of the economic incentives favor affiliate cooperation with the network, placing tremendous programming power in network hands.

In *public* television, money flows the opposite way. Instead of being paid as loyal affiliates, member stations *pay* PBS, which in turn supplies them with programs sufficient to fill prime time and many daytime hours. Stations pay membership dues to cover PBS's operational budget and, entirely separately, fees to cover part of the program costs. PBS is both a not-for-profit network and a membership organization responsible for developing, maintaining and promoting a schedule of programs while also providing services to its dues-paying members. None of the stations are owned by the network. A public station's remaining broadcast hours are typically filled with leased syndicated fare (movies; off-network reruns; made-for-syndication series; and instructional programs for local schools), local productions and programs supplied by other public television networks.

Four noncommercial networks also distribute programming to public stations. Once thought of as a regional network, American Public Television (APT, formerly Eastern Educational Network) is the

second-largest national program supplier for public stations after PBS, and it distributes such favorites as *Globe Trekker*, *The Victory Garden*, *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, *Simply Ming*, *Baking With Julia* and *The Seasoned Traveler* on digital and HD channels. As with PBS, *member stations pay APT for the programs*, which then delivers the requested content to them during off hours via satellite for local recording

and scheduling, more like syndicators. *PBS, however, delivers its programs in a prearranged schedule.*

An entire week of daytime PBS programming in 2011 appears in 10.2, covering the hours from 6 A.M. to 7:30 P.M. The daytime schedule emphasizes programs for preschool children early in the day and for older children after school gets out. Many of these series have run for decades and are award-winning.

10.2 PBS Daytime Programming (September 12–18, 2011)

	Monday–Friday Schedule HD01	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 A.M.	<i>Clifford the Big Red Dog</i>	<i>Mister Rogers' Neighborhood</i>	<i>Sesame Street</i>
6:30 A.M.	<i>Wild Kratts</i>	<i>Bob the Builder</i>	
7:00 A.M.	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>Curious George</i>	<i>Curious George</i>
7:30 A.M.	<i>Martha Speaks</i>	<i>The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!</i>	<i>The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!</i>
8:00 A.M.	<i>Curious George</i>	<i>Super Why!</i>	<i>Super Why!</i>
8:30 A.M.	<i>The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!</i>	<i>Dinosaur Train</i>	<i>Dinosaur Train</i>
9:00 A.M.	<i>Super Why!</i>	<i>Thomas & Friends</i>	<i>Sid the Science Kid</i>
9:30 A.M.	<i>Dinosaur Train</i>	<i>Angelina Ballerina</i>	<i>Martha Speaks</i>
10:00 A.M.	<i>Sesame Street</i>	<i>This Old House Hour</i>	<i>Arthur</i>
10:30 A.M.			<i>WordGirl</i>
11:00 A.M.	<i>Sid the Science Kid</i>	<i>Antiques Roadshow</i>	<i>Wild Kratts</i>
11:30 A.M.	<i>Word World</i>		<i>Electric Company</i>
12:00 P.M.	<i>Super Why!</i>	<i>Baking With Julia</i>	<i>CyberChase</i>
12:30 P.M.	<i>Barney and Friends</i>	<i>The Victory Garden</i>	<i>Fetch! With Ruff Ruffman</i>
1:00 P.M.	<i>Caillou</i>	<i>This Old House</i>	<i>Need to Know</i>
1:30 P.M.	<i>Sid the Science Kid</i>	<i>This Old House</i>	<i>PBS Previews</i>
2:00 P.M.	<i>Dinosaur Train</i>	<i>Ask This Old House</i>	<i>Religion & Ethics</i>
2:30 P.M.	<i>The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!</i>	<i>Hometime</i>	<i>To the Contrary</i>
3:00 P.M.	<i>Curious George</i>	<i>The Woodwright's Shop</i>	<i>This Old House Hour</i>
3:30 P.M.	<i>Martha Speaks</i>	<i>MotorWeek</i>	
4:00 P.M.	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>History Detectives</i>	<i>(Specials)</i>
4:30 P.M.	<i>WordGirl</i>		
5:00 P.M.	<i>Wild Kratts</i>	<i>American Masters</i>	
5:30 P.M.	<i>Electric Company</i>		
6:00 P.M.	<i>Fetch! With Ruff Ruffman</i>		<i>History Detectives</i>
6:30 P.M.	<i>Nightly Business Report</i>		
7:00 P.M.	<i>PBS NewsHour</i>	<i>Antiques Roadshow (repeat)</i>	<i>NOVA</i>
7:30 P.M.			

Courtesy of PBS.

Station Scheduling Autonomy

In public television, much clout rests with the stations. They spend their revenues as they see fit, expecting to be treated fairly and with the deference due any consumer. PBS, as a consequence, has a limited ability to get stations to agree on program scheduling. Citing the principle of *localism* as public television's community service bedrock, station managers display considerable scheduling independence, ostensibly to make room for station-produced or acquired programs thought to meet some local need.

After the nationwide satellite system was phased in (1978) and as low-cost recording equipment became available in the 1970s, stations carried the PBS schedule less and less frequently than originally programmed. Until a networking agreement was worked out with the stations, no two stations' program schedules were remotely alike. National promotion, publicity and advertising placement were,

if not impossible, extremely difficult to achieve. Nor were corporate underwriters pleased at the scheduling irregularity from one market to the next.

Even though more and more stations increasingly mirror the national schedule, decision making about program content remains complicated at the local level. The public broadcasting climate supports multiple layers of choosing what gets on the air, which fuels an often-animated conversation about what audiences need and what stations should broadcast. Those who work in programming within the local stations consider their relative autonomy (even from PBS) and freedom from powerful commercial interests to be worth the extra effort of collaboration. The culture at most stations fosters consultation among programming, development, promotion and operations personnel, but the chief programmer typically has final say in developing programming strategies and the schedule (see 10.3).

10.3

What Do Programmers Do?

Franz Joachim is director of content at KNME-Albuquerque. A 35-year veteran of public television, Joachim got his start as a member of the student crew at KUAT-Tucson in 1976. In subsequent years he also freelanced at KUAT as camera operator, editor and director, until becoming student crew supervisor in 1984. In 1995, he moved to WUSF/WGCU-Ft. Meyers, Florida, to take the position of Senior Editor. Joachim joined the professional staff of KNME in 1999 as Production Manager, a position he held until 2010 when he became director of content at the Albuquerque station.

Joachim sees this career path, which originally focused on production and technology management, as particularly appropriate to his job as chief programmer at KNME. Acknowledging that most programmers come up through the ranks as assistant programmers, schedulers and traffic managers, Joachim sees the PTV programming function as becoming more complicated and demanding. "The job is no longer just about programming, per se. It's now about *content*—content on air, on the web, on the phone, and during Pledge," he says. KNME, a

joint licensee of the Albuquerque Public Schools and the University of New Mexico, holds two licenses, which allows the station to broadcast four streams of content on air and over the internet. Long committed to local public affairs and cultural programming, the station also produces weekly series about New Mexico politics and culture.

KNME pulls programming from a range of sources (including NETA, APT and PBS, as well as local programs) to build its schedule. Selection of content and the schedule grid are typically developed three months out by the programming team, which includes the station's CEO. Once approved, the schedule goes forward then to promotions, operations and development units, where on-air promos are produced and scheduled and underwriting is finalized.

Joachim reports that KNME's programming is generally consistent with the PBS core schedule, rarely deviating from the PBS feed by more than 5 percent over the course of the year. When the PBS schedule conflicts with programs seen as important to local needs, however, like all PTV, KNME invariably chooses the localized option.

The Carriage Agreements

A 1979 common carriage agreement gave some order to this networking chaos, at least from the national perspective. *Common carriage* refers to a nonbinding agreement among stations that, in this case, established a core schedule on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights. During the hours of 8 to 10 P.M. (with time zone delay feeds), PBS fed those programs most likely to attract the largest audiences. In turn, stations committed themselves to airing the PBS core offerings on the nights they were fed, in the order fed, and within the prime-time hours of 8 to 11 P.M.

For several years the common carriage arrangement worked well. The typical *core program* received same-night carriage on more than 80 percent of stations. Core slots thus took on a premium quality; underwriters and producers, looking for favorable treatment for their programs, began to insist they be assigned a time slot within the core period. Maximum carriage was thought to mean maximum audience size. With more core-quality programs on their hands than available hours in the eight-hour core period, PBS programmers were forced in the early 1980s to move some long-standing core programs (*Mystery!* and *Great Performances*, for example) outside the core period to make room for other programs in the hope that the stations would still carry the moved shows on the feed night.

This move was partially successful; even though same-night carriage for the rescheduled programs

fell, it was only to about 55 percent for these non-core programs. Station programmers, however, soon took these moves by PBS as a sign that core programs could be moved around at will, and station independence began to reassert itself. By the 1985–86 season, same-night carriage of the core itself had slipped to 73 percent overall. PBS, concerned with complaints from national underwriters that “their” programs were not receiving fair treatment, moved to bolster same-night carriage. In fall 1987, PBS began a new policy of *same-night carriage* by which selected, broad-appeal programs would be designated for carriage the night they were fed. This policy had little effect, however, because PBS did not strictly enforce it.

In 1995 PBS once again attempted to get control of unpredictable station scheduling. Wanting to encourage new corporate underwriting because Congress had reduced its federal funding, a committee of the PBS board presented the stations with a new common carriage agreement—this time with financial penalties. Some 40 stations refused to sign the agreement until the penalties were removed. The new agreement went into effect in September 1995, requiring stations to carry certain programs within prime time on the feed night (see the programs identified in 10.4). The agreement promised that PBS would designate no more than 350 hours per year for common carriage, of which stations could choose up to 50 hours *not* to carry on feed night, a

10.4 Typical PBS Prime-Time Schedule (September 12–18, 2011)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 P.M.	<i>Antiques Roadshow</i>	<i>Tavis Smiley</i>	<i>Nature</i>	<i>Antiques Roadshow (repeat)</i>	<i>Washington Week in Review</i>	<i>Tavis Smiley</i>	<i>Nature</i>
8:30 P.M.					<i>Need to Know</i>	<i>PBS Previews</i>	
9:00 P.M.	<i>(Specials)</i>	<i>Frontline</i>	<i>NOVA</i>	<i>PBS Previews</i>	<i>American Masters</i>	<i>POV</i>	<i>Masterpiece</i>
10:00 P.M.	<i>(Specials)</i>	<i>POV</i>	<i>NOVA</i>	<i>This Old House Hour</i>	<i>(Specials)</i>	<i>Austin City Limits</i>	

Courtesy of PBS.

provision allowing local programming flexibility. Within these limitations, the agreement stated a goal of 90 percent carriage or better for designated programs.

Most programs designated for common carriage were receiving the requested carriage by at least 90 percent of stations by 2005, and the maximum number of designated hours had risen to 500 per year. As for shows not designated, program managers often tape-delay them outside of prime time, using the vacated evening slots for other programming. As budgets at the local and state levels tighten up, however, stations are expected to use even more of the PBS feed, finding it more cost and time effective than local production and tape delay. As KNME's Joachim notes, "At Channel 5, we now have 50 people doing what 80 used to, plus we're now programming four channels, not just one. We're working to be as efficient as possible, and we're finding that PBS is recognizing that and making efforts to work with us."⁵

Multicasting

Digital TV broadcasts are described as long streams of digital information or bits that can contain any data the broadcaster wants to add to their signals. Public broadcasters, many of whom began with single over-the-air channels in the 1950s and 1960s, are now able to send multiple streams of video through the same channel's "pipeline." Working with compressed content, some public broadcasting stations now choose to "push" four streams of lower-definition programming to air, while others elect to maintain higher signal quality by broadcasting two streams at one time, one of which is always HD. Those stations that are duopolies, holding two licenses, are able to broadcast four programming lines at one time, without compromising quality.

Although some public stations have developed their own local or regional content to fill multiple channels, many have elected to work with four packaged feeds developed by PBS, public stations and established syndicators, and then transmitted to participating public television stations via satellite. These channels include PBS World and Create,

both produced by PBS, WNET-New York, WGBH-Boston, APT and NETA. V-me is a Spanish-language channel developed in partnership by V-me Media, Inc. and WNET-New York with offices in the same building. The fourth channel is MHz Worldview, which has studios in Falls Church, VA, and Washington, DC. This network pulls from a number of international channels and aggregates a feed of public affairs programs, documentaries, dramas, music and sports from Japan, Germany, China, Vietnam, South Africa, France and Nigeria, among others. Although stations pay a tiered price for Create and PBS World, depending on market size, both V-me and MHz International are free, as long as stations abide by stated rules of carriage. (V-me, for example, requires a ten-year commitment.)

It's clear that the technology is in place for stations to provide multiple streams of diverse programming for multiple constituencies. Even so, public television's multicasting efforts generally involve broadcasting more of the same. A review of their schedules reveals that most stations look to older programs and successful PTV trends in developing their streams of content. These decisions are based in no small part on the enormous costs related to new production. As costs rise and revenues flatten and fall, it becomes increasingly difficult to produce or acquire large amounts of new content. Critics also suggest that PTV caters to a "preferred viewer" that is largely upscale, older and well-educated. This institutionalized notion of (much of) the public television audience leads naturally, says scholar Patricia Aufderheide, to PTV programs that are predictable and "safely splendid."⁶

Multiple Platforms

If multicasting is the "push" of PBS content to audiences through multiple streams of programming, multi-platforms are the numerous technologies that allow reception. Your television set is one of these platforms and is clearly the oldest. (In fact, color television sets came to U.S. consumers in the early 1950s at about the same time as "educational, noncommercial" television.) But increasingly, PBS viewers also

get their programs on hand-held devices (cell phones and digital tablets), as well as the internet. Sometimes, they use all these “platforms” at the same time, so it may not be uncommon for a dad to watch *Sesame Street* with his children, while also (simultaneously) viewing *PBS NewsHour* on his cellphone and last week’s episode of *NOVA*, “on demand,” on his laptop. A teenaged daughter, also sitting in this family living room, might be using her tablet to pick up the *American Masters* interview with Pearl Jam’s Eddie Vedder on PBS-YouTube.

Viewers can also follow PBS, as well as many of their favorite shows and celebrities, on Facebook and engage directly on Twitter with Jim Lehrer (*PBS NewsHour*) and Gwen Ifel (*Washington Week in Review*). If you’re into collectibles and old furniture, you can stay up to date with *Antiques Roadshow* by subscribing to its e-newsletter, which is dropped into your email box each month.

Even young kids can stay in touch with their favorite children’s shows (*The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!*, *Dinosaur Train* and *Super Why*) by downloading PBS apps to their phones and tablets and watching programs on demand. PBS has produced at least 14 different apps for mobile devices, and by early 2011 more than 1 million people had downloaded the apps for iPad and iPhone. Additionally, PBS has more than 600,000 Facebook fans and more than 700,000 followers on Twitter. Public TV’s interactions with new media demonstrate its exceptional desire to connect with—and serve—its audiences.

PBS Responsibilities

Since its founding, PBS has had two key responsibilities: *to accept or reject programs* and *to schedule those accepted*. The program acceptance/rejection responsibility is grounded in technical and legal standards established by PBS during the 1970s. The technical standards protect stations from FCC violations and maintain high levels of video and audio quality. By their very nature, they can be applied with reasonable consistency. As the steward for underwriting guidelines, PBS maintains rules for

on-air crediting of PBS program funders to prevent violations of FCC underwriting regulations and to ensure against public television’s appearing too “commercial.” The legal standards protect stations from libel and rights infringements and alert them to equal time obligations that may result from PBS-distributed programs.

Underwriting and advertising are fundamentally different, although they both share some elements. The key difference is that advertising in the form of a paid commercial usually contains a *call to action* (for example, “Stop by our showroom today”). Underwriting presents the name and makes neutral statements (for example, “Funding provided by Kellogg’s, makers of quality breakfast cereal”) that serve to reinforce brand awareness. Over time, the length and kinds of supporting content permitted by PBS rules have become less restrictive, and now on-air crediting is both longer and more detailed but continues to lack action statements, so far.

Even as public television strives to adhere to the tenets of its early noncommercial roots, the broadcasting service has continued to move toward a for-profit model, particularly in its online content. The periodic Congressional threats of defunding make this essential. In 2006 PBS announced a newly-developed online sales division charged with web advertising on public TV’s national website, noting that it would ban ads from broadcasting competitors and be cautious about display ads and commercials for prescription drugs and R-rated movies. Advertising on its children’s sites was to be limited, a vague commitment.

Well, five years later, an examination of Kids Sprouts Online revealed a site tab dedicated to advertisers, carrying the slogan, “With so many engaged parents, there’s no better place to advertise. Live Sprouts!” Further, PBS continues to feature sponsorship banners on its six major web categories—Arts, News & Views, History, Science & Technology, Business & Finance and Home & How-To—and allows banners, aimed at parents rather than children, on PBS KIDS and PBS KIDS GO! Most disconcerting to some viewers has been the insertion of ads in programs that are streamed online.

10.5 Boon or Bust? KCTS, Early HD Pioneer

High definition television (also known as HD or high def) is characterized by video resolution that is much higher than that of standard definition (SD). In fact, HD has between one and two million pixels per frame, which is roughly five times the resolution of SDTV.

Since U.S. broadcasting officially “went digital” in 2009, we’ve come to expect very high image quality in the television programs we watch. At least one channel on all PBS stations is now broadcast in high definition, and today much of the programming on PBS is created—through videography, editing, graphics, sound and special effects—in high definition format, which inherently raises video quality even on a non-HD digital channel.

Even though several PBS stations (most of them large community stations in major markets) were innovators in digital transition, one station—KCTS-Seattle—stands out as a leader. The station not only took steps in 1998 (eleven years before the mandated transition!) to broadcast some of its schedule in digital format, but also pioneered production in high definition. Because of a long-standing, collaborative relationship with NHK, Japan’s public TV network, KCTS was able to borrow the HD gear required to shoot several shows, including *Over California* (1994) and *Chihuly Over Venice* (1998). This extremely scarce HD equipment included not only a 40-pound SONY camera—called the “best video camera in the world”—but also a 300-pound recorder that required its own power supply.

These early HD programs, which were shot mostly by a videographer hanging out the side door of a noisy helicopter, were lush “travelogues” of the countryside below. Viewers likened the experience, with its sweeping visuals and orchestral soundtrack, to the immersive dome technology present in many planetarium shows.*

KCTS offered the programs (and other similar shows that followed) to public stations as fundraisers and thus

established itself as the PBS market leader in digital broadcasting. This reputation did not come without a price, however. Local newspaper reports later made the case that the expense of high-end digital production and distribution contributed to KCTS’s massive debt and the layoffs of staff beginning in 1998. Members of the management team that had pushed KCTS to pioneer in digital broadcasting retired early in 2003 in the face of widespread staff upheaval and a station deficit of \$2.5 million. Not only was KCTS unable to pay its rent to the city of Seattle in 2002, but the Corporation for Public Broadcasting withheld nearly \$750,000 in funding in 2003 because the station’s financial reports were late.**

How much of the KCTS financial downturn can be traced to its early and aggressive push to “go digital” is debatable, but it seems clear that the station’s deficits, which began as early as 1996, were linked to early explorations and adoption of expensive digital production and upgrading initiatives. At the same time, it also seems clear that the public system as a whole benefited from KCTS’s pioneering forays into the digital realm, using the Seattle station’s high-def programs in fundraising, taking cues from its digital transition and learning from its mistakes. This case study illustrates the risk of being a technological pioneer, particularly in such high-stakes innovation as the digital transformation of a television network. Was it worth the cost to KCTS, its staff, and the management team that put the plan in place? You decide!

*Although PBS stations have not experimented broadly with digital dome technology, as it is tied to a particular classroom or theatre space and not broadcasting, PTV stations and producers have entered into educational partnerships with air and space museums and planetariums to share programming.

**“Trouble on Channel 9,” *The Seattle Times* 22 May, 2003, retrieved at <http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/news/local/links/kcts.html>.

These decisions to commercialize part of the PBS website are also reflected in efforts to satisfy the needs of corporate sponsors by changing on-air guidelines for underwriting credits to more closely resemble those of commercial broadcasting. Public television underwriters increasingly are using the same spots they place on commercial venues. Further, in the

past, most public TV underwriting opportunities have been limited to a year. Now, stations and PBS are offering shorter sponsorship stints, including some as short as a week for children’s programs such as *Clifford* and *Arthur*. Critics and proponents alike maintain the effort is to create a more “sales-friendly” environment for companies hard-hit by

financial woes. Of course, at the same time, it also generates more advertising receptivity in children.

Finally, PBS announced at the PTV annual meeting in 2011 that it was experimenting with placement of internal promotional material in PBS programs. The proposal was met with such outcry that PBS underwriting and programming executives agreed to back off and just continue their research about ramifications of such a plan. Critics suggest that internal promotion not only violates public TV's long-standing commitments to uninterrupted programming, but also opens the doors widely to in-program advertising breaks.

Old-timers remember the days when an underwriting credit was a corporate name on a slide, featured at the beginning and close of the underwritten program for 15 seconds. Many join contemporary critics in suggesting that program interruption and increased commercial content may damage public television's already weak support in Congress and lead to even more reduced allocations during the next funding cycle.

Another PBS function is warning stations in advance of programs that contain offensive language or sensitive scenes (nudity or violence). It makes edited versions of programs that contain extreme material available to stations. In rare cases, such controversial programs as *It's Elementary* (a documentary on gay issues in grade school) have been canceled or postponed, but in general PBS tends toward airing programs as produced.

Day-to-Day Management

An executive vice president heads PBS's National Program Service (NPS). This senior executive sets policy for and oversees the content and array of formats within the program schedule, directing long-range development of major programs. Other managers assist in the day-to-day activities of program development, scheduling management and acquisition of international programs, while content departments within the NPS concentrate on the development of news and public-affairs, children's, cultural and fundraising programs.

PBS Plus offers a menu of "user-pays" programs to supplement local schedules. Other departments

deliver programs for adult at-home college education and in-school instruction for children. Interactive and online services, extensions of PBS's programming, were introduced in the mid-1990s—including *Mathline* for students and *PBS Online* on the internet (www.pbs.org). Thus, programming for the station broadcasts is only part of PBS's activities.

Satellite Distribution

The broadcast operations department manages the daily details of the national schedule much as a traffic department would at a commercial network. All the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle must be plugged into place across an array of satellite schedules, ensuring, for example, that (1) the end of a 13-episode series coincides with the start of another ready to occupy its slot; (2) dramas with profanity or nudity have an early edited feed available on another transponder; and (3) replacement programs are available when, for example, the Saturday morning schedule of how-to programs runs short in the summer.

PBS now delivers instructional and general audience services via direct-to-home satellite channels (TVRO) as well as the regular national programming feed provided to PBS member stations retransmitted by DirecTV and DISH Network, but delayed by 24 hours to allow member stations the opportunity to air the programming first. In 1999, PBS initiated two other satellite program services, PBS Kids Channel (children's programming) and PBS U (adult learning service for college credit) carried on DirecTV. (See 10.6 for the story of the adult educational services.) In March 2004, PBS also launched PBS HD, making public broadcasting first to provide a fully-packaged 24/7 channel consisting entirely of high definition and widescreen content.

PBS HD was available from local PBS stations that had already transitioned to digital broadcasting, as well as digital cable systems that agreed to retransmit the digital signal of their local public television stations. By the mid-2000s, 236 PBS stations were on the air with digital signals, reaching more than 85 percent of U.S. TV households. The PBS HD channel featured a mix of new and library HD and widescreen programs, providing around-the-clock high

10.6

The Demise of the Adult Learning Service

PBS began its Adult Learning Service (ALS) in the early 1980s, offering over-the-air instruction leading to college credit for more than two decades. With over 100 telecourses, the ALS was the largest source of such programming in the world. Enhanced by the web and then programmed as a network (PBS U), the service supplied college credit to more than 5 million students in academic areas including arts and humanities, business and technology, history, professional development, science and health, and the social sciences.

Shortly after its launch, ALS received a significant boost from Walter Annenberg, then owner of *TV Guide*, who established the Annenberg/CPB Project. For this project, the Annenberg School of Communications gave \$15 million to CPB each year for ten years (1983 to 1993) to fund college-level instruction via television and other new technologies. The project resulted in such high-visibility public television series as *The Constitution: That Delicate Balance*, *French in Action*, *Planet Earth*, *The Africans*, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, *Art of the Western World*, *Discovering Psychology* and *Economics USA*, with subject matter ranging from the humanities to science,

mathematics, and business. The net result of Annenberg's entry into this field was not only an increase in the number of adult instructional programs available through ALS but also, thanks to their above-average budgets, an increase in production values (quality).

Colleges and universities that wanted to offer credit for these telecourses normally arranged for local public television stations to air the series, and all registration, fees, testing, and supplementary materials were handled by the school. Some of the courses used computers, and all were keyed to special texts and study guides. ALS offered programmers one of the most challenging additions to their program schedule. Because such programs required close cooperation with the institutions offering credit, they required a reliable repeat schedule that would permit students to make up missed broadcasts. In time, however, the wide availability of internet access ended the need for PBS to act as distributor. Universities could email course materials and video directly to individual students, irrespective of the number taking a particular class, and now with Wi-Fi on campuses and larger towns, people can take courses whenever and wherever they like.

quality content to those “early innovators” who owned high definition receivers. This channel evolved into HD01 (the PBS high definition feed), as all PBS stations eventually proved capable of providing HD programming on at least one of their channels.

By 2002, PBS Kids Channel wasn't doing well in competition with Viacom's Noggin, a digital cable/satellite channel that featured *Sesame Street* reruns and other satellite channels targeting children. Withdrawal of DirecTV's support in 2005 led to the formation of PBS Kids Sprout and PBS Sprout On Demand, digital commercial channels on cable owned by Comcast, HIT Entertainment, PBS and Sesame Workshop. They carry such shows as *Angelina Ballerina*, *Curious George*, *Barney & Friends*, *Bob the Builder*, *Teletubbies*, *Thomas & Friends*, *Dragon Tales*, *Zoboomafoo* and of course, the so-essential *Sesame Street*. The term “PBS Kids” returned to the main network as an umbrella brand

for preschool children's programming (offering *Arthur*, *Clifford the Big Red Dog* and *Curious George*), along with PBS Kids GO! for early elementary kids (which provided such shows as *Kidsworld Sports*, *Arthur*, *Maya & Miguel* and *Wishbone*). Although not in HD as yet, all these over-the-air and digital services are supported with clever online sites, www.pbskids.org, www.pbskidsgo.org and www.sproutonline.com. In most markets, households that subscribe to Comcast or DirecTV get most of these channels; other cable, satellite and phone service providers offer some, but not all, of the PBS channels. The internet remains a reliable source of all PBS content.

Fundraising Assistance

The Station Independence Program (SIP), a division in PBS's National Program Service, is big hit with stations. The SIP schedules and programs three main

on-air fundraising drives a year, called *pledge drives* (a 16-day event held annually in March and two 9-day drives held in August and December). Stations wishing to avail themselves of the SIP service (and most do) pay PBS additional fees for it. A key SIP function is acquiring, funding and commissioning special programs for use during local station pledge drives.

Programs with emotional payoff, not necessarily those programs with the largest audiences, tend to generate more and higher pledges. Self-help programs and inspirational dramas, for example, generally make money for stations, but documentaries on topics such as world economics do not do well. In general, such performance events as *Yanni* and *Three Tenors* do very well in pledge drives. As baby boomers age and edge closer to the typical demographic of “donor,” pledge programmers also rely increasingly on concerts (live and on tape) by music icons of the 1960s and 1970s, including Joan Baez, James Taylor, Chaka Khan, Billy Joel and the folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary.

Types of Station Licensees

One of the difficulties in describing PTV programming strategies is that the stations are so diverse. The 168 *licensees* operating 354 *stations* (lots of which are unstaffed transmitters) represent varied management viewpoints. More stations (that is, transmitters) than licensees exist because in 20 states a legislatively created agency for public broadcasting is the licensee for as many as 16 separate transmitters serving the whole state. Also, in several communities, one noncommercial educational licensee operates two television channels. In these cases (San Francisco, Boston, Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, among others), one channel usually offers a relatively broad service of PBS programming while the second channel is used for more specialized programming, often instructional material. In addition, a handful of noncommercial television stations are not members of PBS because of signal overlap with other PBS stations or because they dropped their membership.

Much of public television’s diversity is explained by the varying auspices under which its stations operate. Licensees fall into four categories: *community*, *university*, *public school* and *state agency*, and each approaches programming in different ways.

Community Licensees

In larger cities, particularly those with many educational and cultural institutions but without a dominant institution or school system, the usual licensee is the nonprofit community corporation created for the purpose of constructing and operating a public television station. Because the governing board of such a station exists solely to administer the station (as compared with university trustees who have lots of other concerns), many feel that community stations are the most responsive type of licensee. With the separation of community licensee KCET-Los Angeles from PBS in early 2011, 85 such licensees still operate in the United States (see 10.7).

Compared with other licensees, community stations have traditionally derived a higher proportion of their operating support from fundraising activities (including on-air auctions). As a result, their on-air pledge-drives reflect their so very urgent need to generate funds from their viewers. Programmers at these stations are thus more likely to be sensitive to a proposed program’s appeal to donors. Certainly, they will lean toward high-quality production values to attract and hold general audiences. Within the community category, several stations stand apart because of their metropolitan origins, their large size and their national impact as producers of network-distributed programs.

The flagship stations of PBS are located in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Washington, Chicago, Baltimore, Seattle and Pittsburgh. The first four are particularly notable as production centers for the nation, originating such major programs as *NOVA*, *Nature* and *PBS NewsHour* (see 10.8). Although other public stations and commercial entities often participate in their productions and financing, these large, community-licensed producing stations generate most of the PBS schedule.

10.7

Stations Withdraw From PBS

In 2008, public broadcasting licensees included 86 community stations, 6 local public school facilities, 20 state government stations or networks, and 56 college or university stations. Three years later, those numbers had dropped by three, and other stations and their boards were considering leaving PBS. KWBU-Waco, a university station licensed to Baylor University, was the first of the three to close. Having exhausted a \$1 million line of credit, KWBU was unable to secure additional funding from Baylor and subsequently severed all ties with PBS, going “dark” in 2010. Within a year, KCET-Los Angeles and WMFE-Orlando had also decided to leave PBS. Like KWBU (which had limited community support and only 1,600 members when it closed), the stations cited financial woes as the reason for dropping the PBS affiliation or closing altogether.

The case of KCET is chilling. After learning that its PBS dues would increase by more than 40 percent, ironically because of the station’s success in generating \$50 million in donations, KCET-TV split from PBS in 2011, becoming an independent community station. One of the country’s oldest public stations and the PBS flagship of the nation’s second-largest media market, KCET pioneered productions in the arts, Spanish-language programming, education and public affairs, so it was an enormous loss to the system.

KCET sold its historic 105,000 square-foot Sunset Boulevard facility to the Church of Scientology and moved into quarters half that size in Burbank. Initially programming its

“independent” schedule with local talk and re-runs of classic films, the station adopted an eclectic international stance by airing a range of worldwide news programs. These daily broadcasts included *IBA News* (Tel Aviv), *NHK Newsline* (Tokyo), *Russia Today* (Moscow) and the *Al Jazeera English News*, and the ratings are looking good. Happily for PBS and the former KCET audience, public stations KOCE-Orange County and KVCR-San Bernardino enlarged their coverage areas to serve PBS viewers in the Los Angeles area.

The fate of the huge New Jersey Network (NJN) rings another warning bell. The 40-year-old PTV network in New Jersey was closed by the state’s budget-cutting efforts. PBS service to New Jersey had to be picked up by New York and Pennsylvania stations WNET and WHYY as best they could. Similarly, the University of Central Florida and Brevard Community College teamed up to jointly provide PBS services to Central Florida, when WMFE-Orlando closed its PBS station in 2011.

Change is here. Another giant in the system, WTTW-Chicago suggested that it might withdraw from PBS, while Indiana’s eight public television stations are working on a merger that would not only share content but also facilities (including master control) among the stations. The stunning losses to the PTV system help explain why PBS is altering its policy toward commercials. *Programs continue to cost what they cost even when there are fewer (and smaller) stations to split the expense.*

Because of comparatively high levels of community involvement, community stations have tended to attract larger local audiences than other types of noncommercial licensees. Most of these stations adopted HD technology at a rapid rate at the turn of the twenty first century, largely because their membership tends toward the high-end viewers of interest to underwriters. For example, Nielsen reports that about half of the households in San Francisco, one of the nation’s largest media markets, tune weekly to community-operated KQED. With such a high audience level, more of its viewers see its fundraising appeals and thus contribute money to

the station. WNET, New York’s largest public television station, is an exception among community stations. It receives a portion of its funding from state government.

University Licensees

Many colleges and universities have activated public television stations as a natural outgrowth of their traditional role of providing extension services within their states. As they see it, “the boundaries of the campus are the boundaries of the state,”⁷ and both radio and television can do some of the tasks

10.8

PBS NewsHour

In 1973 Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer joined together to cover the Watergate hearings for PBS. The results were an Emmy and a new news program for Public Broadcasting. Unlike the commercial nightly newscasts, MacNeil and Lehrer were actually throwbacks to Edward R. Murrow and *See It Now*. Instead of doing many two-minute stories, they concentrated on one major story and went in-depth. They let people tell their own versions of the story in interviews that lasted several minutes; they also avoided sound bites and ran extended portions of news conferences. These were usually followed by nonjudgmental cross-examinations that questioned what had been said.

In 1983, the program, then called *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, saw its only major format change as it went from 30 minutes to a full hour. It added a news summary of major stories at the start and increased the number of in-depth stories from one to three or four, each running 10 to 15 minutes. Because the show airs on PBS, it currently has no interruptions (except during pledge drives). Mondays through Thursdays, the program often wraps up with a "reflective essay."

When Robert MacNeil retired in 1995, the show became *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, and in 2006, acquired new graphics and a new version of the show's theme song, but otherwise stayed about the same. In 2009 PBS added rotating anchors and renamed the show *PBS NewsHour*. The most recent change, instituted in 2011, remains the most significant. After 36 years with PBS, Lehrer stepped down as a daily anchor of *PBS NewsHour*, electing instead to cover specific stories and to moderate the highly-popular Friday weekly analysis segment with Mark Shields and David Brooks.

PBS NewsHour is one of PBS's most successful programs, reaching over 8 million people during a week in the

United States and averaging 2.7 million viewers each night. The program also airs in Australia, Japan and New Zealand and is broadcast by Voice of America and Armed Forces Radio. Keeping up with the PBS tradition of trying new technologies, the program has archived all broadcasts on the web since early 2000, and they can be accessed as streaming video. In addition, audio segments are also released in podcast form.

Strangely enough, on a network often criticized for its left-leaning shows and a tendency to slant the news, *PBS NewsHour* has been attacked for being too "mainstream" and for having a "pro-establishment bias." Several studies released by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a "left-oriented" media watch group, have accused the show of being too balanced, of favoring Republicans and business, and of not having enough minorities. One of the group's major objections in 2006 was "not one peace activist" had appeared on the show during the six months analyzed. The 2011 critique took similar issue with the lack of diversity of viewpoint about the war in Libya, leaving "little room for antiwar voices" and critics of U.S. foreign policy.

The PBS Ombudsman, Michael Getler, agreed, saying: "These are perilous times. As a viewer and journalist, I find the program occasionally frustrating; sometimes too polite, too balanced when issues are not really balanced, and too many political and emotion-laden statements pass without factual challenges from the interviewer." * In this day and age, *PBS NewsHour* may have a unique distinction in being criticized for being too fair.

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*www.pbs.org/ombudsman/2006/10/a_fair_analysis.html.

extension agents formerly did in person. Fifty-five licensees currently make up the university group.

Here, too, programmers schedule a fairly broad range of programs, largely in HD as well as digital, often emphasizing adult continuing education and culture. Some, typically using student staff, produce nightly local newscasts, and many produce a weekly public-

affairs or cultural program. But these stations rarely produce major PBS series for the prime-time schedule, lacking both budget and permanent staffing. University-licensed stations such as WHA (Madison, Wisconsin) and KUHT (Houston, Texas) contribute occasional specials and single programs to the PBS schedule. WUNC-TV at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill

produced *The Woodwright's Shop* series, and other university-licensed stations have supported short-run series aired in the daytime PBS schedule.

As operating costs mount and academic appropriations shrink, some university stations turn to over-the-air fundraising to supplement their institution's budgets. In doing so they use tactics similar to those of community stations, including airing programs specially produced for fundraisers. Expanded fundraising efforts are generally accompanied by broadening program appeal throughout the station's schedule, although the shows target a wide range of small, niche audiences.

Public School Licensees

Local school systems initially became licensees to provide new learning experiences for students in elementary school classrooms. From the outset, some schools augmented instructional broadcasts with other programming consistent with the school system's view of its educational mission. By 2008 only six of these school licensees remained. Most of them have organized a broadly-based community support group whose activities generate wider interest and voluntary contributions from the community at large. As a result, the average local-school licensee now draws only about 7 percent of its income from subscriber contributions.

Naturally, programmers at these stations are heavily involved with in-school programming—but because they desire community support, they are also concerned with programming for children out of school and for adults of all ages. All of these stations transmit a digital signal but, depending on station resources, may not yet have full HD production capability. Due to the significant costs of converting all studio, editing and field equipment to high definition, some stations still produce programs in standard definition and “upconvert” the video to HD.

Other than ITV series, most public school stations rarely produce original programs for PBS, and they obtain most of their schedules from national, state and regional suppliers of instructional programming. Of course, they usually carry such general (non-ITV) PBS educational children's programs as *Sesame Street*, too.

State Television Agencies

About 186 of the nation's 354 public television transmitters are part of state networks operated by legislatively created public broadcasting agencies. Networks of this type exist in 20 states (or did until New Jersey faded away). Most of them were authorized initially to provide new classroom experiences for the state's schoolchildren and have usually succeeded admirably in this task. Then they augmented their ITV service with a variety of public-affairs and cultural programs furnished to citizens throughout their states, but rarely in HD.

State networks, such as those in South Carolina, Maryland, Kentucky, Nebraska and Iowa, are very active in the production and national distribution of educational programs. Their efforts range from traditional school programs for primary and secondary grades to graduate degree courses offered in regions where colleges and universities are few. These production efforts are thus counterparts to the national production centers of the community-based licensees. Although state networks hardly ever produce prime-time PBS series, they frequently join consortia generating specific programs for series such as *Great Performances*. Moreover, the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting does produce the long-lived PBS series *Wall Street Week*.

Although in recent years these state network stations have gotten more foundation, underwriter and even viewer support, state legislatures still appropriate more than three-fifths of their budgets. This fact, plus the perception of their “community of service” as an entire state rather than a single city, gives programmers at these stations a different perspective ... and keeps them at risk as state budgets shrink.

Similarities and Differences

It should be quite evident from these brief descriptions that each category of public television station has distinctive problems and singular opportunities for programming. Each station type is ruled by a different type of board of directors—community

leader boards, university trustees, local school boards, state-appointed central boards. Each board affects overall strategy and program personnel differently:

- Community representatives try to balance local power groups and foster underwriting.
- University boards, preoccupied with higher-education programs, tend to leave station professionals free to carry out their jobs within broad guidelines.
- School boards, similarly preoccupied with their major missions, may pay too little attention to their responsibilities as licensees.
- State boards try to protect their stations from inappropriate political influences and drastic budget cuts.

All licensees in both public TV and public radio struggle to function with what they regard as inadequate budgets, but there are wide funding discrepancies between the extremes of a large metropolitan community TV station and a small public-school radio station. Significantly, all types of stations have been forced to broaden their financial bases in recent years to keep up with rising costs and funding while improving program quality and quantity.

Licensees having the greatest success in securing new funding have, in general, made the strongest impact on national public television programming. In turn, successful public television producer-entrepreneurs working through their local stations are highly motivated to create new public television programs with broad audience appeal in the hope of securing still more underwriting. Such programs increase viewership and draw more support in the form of memberships and subscriptions.

Public-affairs programs and those of interest only to specialized smaller audiences—the “meat and potatoes” of public television—do not always appeal to corporations (who usually want to avoid controversy) and must be funded by CPB, PBS or foundations (see 10.9). Public radio operates differently but still shares some of the same problems (see 10.10).

Program Production

Early in its history, PBS developed a characteristic schedule of dramatic miniseries and anthologies; documentaries on topics in science, nature, public affairs and history; concert performances; and a few other types of programs, none of which ABC, CBS, FOX or NBC offers on a regular basis. PBS’s marketplace position has thus historically been that of an alternative to the commercial networks. Today, however, several cable networks (including the Discovery Channel, A&E, the History Channel, The Learning Channel, the Food Channel, House & Garden) offer some programs similar to PBS’s.

From time to time, some members of Congress—important critics because of CPB funding and grants: Congress supplies public television with about 16.4 percent of PBS’s annual revenue—argue that PBS has become superfluous because it duplicates programming available on cable. The argument lacks merit because about 8 percent of U.S. TV households don’t subscribe to either cable or satellite, while 99 percent can receive PBS. Moreover, fewer cable subscribers actually watch the cable networks that have PBS-like programs; PBS’s ratings are two to four times larger.

Program Financing

How a program gets into the PBS schedule contrasts dramatically with the process at its commercial network counterparts. At ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC and most cable networks, program chiefs order the programs they want, pay for them out of a programming budget, then slot them into the schedule. To minimize ratings failures, the networks first pay for the production of pilot programs each year. Additional episodes of the most promising pilots are ordered, and each of these series receives a place in the schedule (see Chapter 2 for more details).

At PBS, however, program funding is far more complex. A program may have a single financial backer or several. More frequently than not, funding comes from a combination of sources, especially when the project runs into millions of dollars. PBS will partially fund and, on occasion, fully fund a

10.9 Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Although largely invisible to most people, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is the largest single source of funding for public television and radio programming in the United States. This private nonprofit organization was established with the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967 to support and fund the development of educational, locally relevant and culturally diverse programs for public broadcasting. It created the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 1969 and National Public Radio (NPR) in 1970. Most of CPB-funded programs are distributed through PBS, NPR, Television (APT) and Public Radio International (PRI).

Though it awards federal grants, CPB has a legal mandate to be nonpartisan and ensure objectivity on public programming. Yet controversies continue to plague CPB. In the mid-2000s, Democrats called for an investigation into whether CPB violated federal law when its former chairman Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, a Bush appointee, commissioned a review of several PBS and NPR programs in order to investigate liberal bias. Programs under review included the *Now With Bill Moyers* show, which had been criticized for being left-leaning. Tomlinson resigned in 2006 after investigations by CPB's inspector general revealed he "had made improper hires, had tried to tamper with PBS's TV programming and appeared to show political favoritism in selecting CPB's president while he was chairman."^{*}

In 2011, the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to ban government funding for NPR and affiliated public broadcasting stations. Conservatives claimed this would cut and control federal spending, but critics say it was in response to earlier fallout with NPR. These notably include the firing of NPR news analyst Juan Williams

for remarks he made on Fox News Channel's *The O'Reilly Factor* (see 10.10) and a sting video showing NPR's then senior vice-president for fundraising Ron Schiller describing the Tea Party political movement as "xenophobic."

In the end, Congress spared the basic appropriation for CPB, which included \$430 million annually for 2011 and 2012, plus another \$445 million for 2013. CPB also retained \$6 million for digital projects, which was the balance of a fund that had previously been set at \$36 million a year. Journalist Steve Behrens reported that "the late night negotiations" also saved NPR from a Republican-led effort to ban federal funding for public radio.^{**}

What did not survive in the budget deliberations was the 49-year-old Public Telecommunications Facilities Program, a \$20-million line item in the Department of Commerce. This longstanding public broadcasting program had been used successfully for years by public broadcasters for start-up funds for new stations, to replace failing transmitters or to convert to HD. In 2010, even though more than 90 percent of the country was covered by both public TV and NPR, the facilities program awarded grants to 30 new public radio operations and one new PTV station.

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^{*}Paul Farhi, "Tomlinson Cited for Abuses at Broadcast Board: CPB Ex-Chief Puts Friend on Payroll, State Dept. Says." *Washington Post*, 22 January 2007, p. C1.

^{**}Steve Behrens, "CPB Survives, But Not the Facilities Program," *Current*, 18 April 2011. <http://www.current.org/federal/fed1108ptfp.html>.

project out of its station program assessment funds, but many programs must find their own backing. Of course, producers would prefer to walk away from PBS with a check for the full amount. But owing to PBS's limited purse, they must usually "shop" a project from one corporate headquarters to the next, perhaps even to foundations and CPB. Given the daunting process, producers have been heard to say that they spend more time chasing after dollars than making programs.

Program assessment fees, now levied on PBS member stations, were begun in the early 1990s. They represent public television's response to expanding cable network competition for the limited supply of programs to buy (see 10.11). Stations voted to streamline the program funding process so that newly offered productions could be snapped up without delays. The chief program executives now handle selected program funding as a centralized responsibility (in contrast to the long-beloved

10.10 Financing NPR

NPR's firing of analyst Juan Williams in October 2010 set off a firestorm by both the right and left, who variously charged that the radio network had denied Williams his right to speak. In an appearance on Fox Channel's *The O'Reilly Factor*, Williams said he got "worried" and "nervous" when he saw people in Muslim dress on airplanes. Maintaining that Williams' comments were inconsistent with NPR's editorial standards, Ellen Weiss, NPR Director of News, promptly called Williams and told him his contract was being terminated.

Even though NPR chief executive officer Vivian Schiller agreed that Williams' dismissal was appropriate, the termination evolved into a public relations nightmare for NPR. The radio network received more than 23,000 emails about the incident, almost all of them negative. Williams, a black man working in a largely white organization, was perceived by many conservatives as a target of liberal bias. Eventually, Weiss, a 30-year veteran of public radio, resigned her position. Ironically, Williams went to work for FOX, with an annual contract of \$2 million.

Five months later, public radio suffered another embarrassing setback, when a conservative sting video captured NPR's chief fundraiser disparaging Tea Party supporters as "seriously racist" and asserting that NPR would be better off without federal funding, "although some stations would go dark." Both Ron Schiller, vice-president for NPR's Foundation, and CEO Vivian Schiller (no relation to Ron Schiller) subsequently (and immediately) resigned amid questions about NPR's management and calls to defund the radio network.

Ultimately, both Williams' termination and the sting video had negative ramifications for both public television and NPR. Conservative media commentators and Republican lawmakers, in particular, used the incidents to claim that public broadcasting was partisan and undeserving of public funding. House Republicans passed a bill in March 2011 to ban government funding for NPR and affiliated public broadcasting stations, and though defeated at the eleventh hour, the budget bill posed a genuine threat to federal funding for public broadcasting. Several states—including New Jersey, Virginia and Florida—followed the lead of the House bill to implement deep cuts in their states' funding for public stations.

10.11 PBS Competing for Kids

Cross-platform initiatives are not restricted to the commercial networks. *PBSKIDSGO.org* introduced *Kids-World Sports*, a website based on an international documentary series that profiles kid-athletes who have the talent and drive to succeed in various sports. On the site, kids can watch short clips from the series, learn about different sports from videos featuring real kids, send video e-cards and compete in sport-related games.

News Flash Five, another PBS effort, is a current events website aimed at tweens aged 8–11. It features a cast of five kids, rendered in flash animation, who report on

national and world news, technology, entertainment, sports and weather. On the site, kids are able to play games such as Just the Facts (news quiz), Pin Point (finding places in the news on a map), Match It (connecting photos to newsmakers) and Get the Scoop (news gathering and writing). PBS's efforts match those of Nickelodeon, the top commercial channel for kids, and are far beyond the efforts of the broadcast networks.

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notion that program decision making should be tightly controlled by public television's 168 station program managers—who usually had 168 opinions).

To form this fund, stations are assessed in proportion to their market size (and the loss of major-market member stations hurts badly here). Programs produced either wholly or in part from this fund

carry an announcement crediting “viewers like you” because station money is involved—a large part of which comes from viewer contributions.

A program on PBS can—and usually does—have multiple producers. Typically, separate production units shoot film for partners in a coproduction deal, as when PBS joins with the BBC to produce a science or nature program. In such an arrangement, both have usage rights. Rather than share a program with a U.S. competitor, such as a cable network, public television prefers foreign coproduction over domestic coproduction.

The Major Producers

As already pointed out, a very large portion of PBS’s schedule comes from series produced by or in conjunction with three major producing stations—WGBH in Boston, WNET in New York and WETA in Washington, DC. In most years, these producing stations account for well over half of PBS’s new shows (see the list in 10.12). Other stations

contribute an occasional series or special to the PBS schedule, but most local efforts either focus too narrowly on a topic to be of wide national interest or fall short of national standards for writing, talent and technical characteristics because they lack a sufficient budget. PBS seeks programs on a par with commercial efforts in terms of content and production quality.

British programs such as *Masterpiece* and *Mystery!* have become staples of U.S. public television because they are high-quality programs available at a small fraction of the cost of producing comparable fare in the United States. But they, along with other foreign productions, occupy only a fraction of all PBS airtime. Beside a mix of foreign producers, international coproductions, commercial independent producers and the three producing stations, such producing organizations as Sesame Workshop (formerly Children’s Television Workshop) have traditional ties to PBS.

This pattern of multiple sources has been consistent over decades, although increased competition from cable networks for foreign programs has further squeezed PBS’s options. The greatest change in programming in recent years has been the acquisition of funds by means of station program assessment, not in the actual program sources.

10.12 Major Producing Centers

Stations	Program Series
WGBH, Boston	<i>American Experience</i>
	<i>Antiques Roadshow</i>
	<i>Arthur</i>
	<i>Frontline</i>
	<i>Masterpiece</i>
	<i>Mystery!</i>
	<i>NOVA</i>
	<i>This Old House</i>
	<i>American Masters</i>
WNET, New York	<i>Charlie Rose</i>
	<i>Great Performances</i>
	<i>Live from Lincoln Center</i>
	<i>Metropolitan Opera Presents</i>
	<i>Nature</i>
WETA, Washington, DC	<i>In Performance at the White House</i>
	<i>PBS NewsHour</i>
	<i>Washington Week in Review</i>

Balance in Selection

Responsibility for acquiring programs falls to one of several “content” managers, including the directors of Factual Programming, Fiction and Performance Programming, and Children’s Programming. They must view sample tapes (demonstrations) and sift through many hundreds of proposals each year. Based on these written proposals or sample tapes (pilot episodes are very rarely made), the manager decides whether to purchase the program or provide some portion of production funding.

Happily, in the case of foreign productions, a program can be purchased ready for broadcast because it’s already “in the can” (produced). If the decision on a proposal for a new production is favorable, a small research and development grant is usually the first step, perhaps with a promise of larger

amounts to follow. Once production is under way, the content manager will consult with the producer during the production process to guide the outcome toward a mutually satisfactory result. It is important to note that, by law, *PBS can order programs to be produced, but it does not itself produce them.*

Through all this, National Program Service executives attempt to maintain balance in the national schedule so that the network doesn't find itself one season with, for example, too many symphony concerts and too few investigative documentaries in the schedule. To better regulate the flow of new productions into the national schedule, PBS established the Public Television Pipeline, a management system for monitoring and coordinating all program development activity from the proposal stage through delivery to PBS.

Throughout the year, the Pipeline sends signals to producers about PBS's overall schedule surpluses and shortfalls as well as specific content needs. Proposals are submitted and approval (and perhaps seed money) obtained from PBS, and the final selection process is under way. Pipeline 2011, published in *Current* in December 2010, included 140 projects scheduled for production within the public television system. A lot of juggling goes on to get something new in the Pipeline.

Corporate Pressure

Corporate underwriters of programs invest not only prodigious sums from corporate treasuries but also personal effort and reputation, and they feel entitled to choice slots in the prime-time schedule. Of course, PBS can't always fit a program in the time slot the underwriter wants and still maintain a balanced schedule.

Corporate fiscal needs can also affect scheduling. Often, the underwriting corporation requires that a program be played within its fiscal year—irrespective of audience and schedule needs. PBS program executives attempt to accommodate such cases, knowing that if they do not, the corporation in its pique may refuse future requests for support.

The major producing stations also attempt to influence program decisions at PBS on behalf of

their program underwriters. For those stations, financial health depends on corporate support, which pays for salaries, equipment loans and other production expenses. Were just one major underwriter to withdraw support, the financial effect on a producing station could be devastating.

Station Pressure

Other programming pressures occur. Many stations, for example, *refuse* to telecast a program at the time fed because their programmers decide it

1. lacks prime-time quality.
2. contains too much profanity or violence to air in early evening.
3. occupies a slot the station wants for its own programs.
4. has little appeal for local viewers.

Although each of these reasons has merit at times, the combined effect of 168 station program managers exercising 168 independent judgments has often left portions of the PBS schedule in a shambles. PBS program executives assembling a schedule must anticipate these concerns to minimize defections.

Program Rights

PBS programmers must also wrestle with program rights. In public television as in commercial television, standard program air-lease rights are set by contract with the producer, who owns the rights. PBS has traditionally negotiated with producers for as many plays as possible so that by airing the same program several times, the typically small (per airing) PBS audience snowballs. Extra plays also fill out the program schedule.

At the same time, the program syndicator seeks as few airings as possible over the shortest time period to retain maximum control and resale potential for a program. A compromise between various producers and PBS that permits *four program plays within three years is now the standard rights agreement in public television.*